



TOEIC Bridge® tests and TOEIC® tests

Family of assessments for beginner- to
advanced-level English learners

The TOEIC Program provides comprehensive assessments of English-communication skills for everyday life and the workplace. The TOEIC Bridge® tests focus on beginner to intermediate levels of English, while the TOEIC tests are better suited for intermediate to advanced English skills. In this way, the TOEIC family of assessments supports the learning journeys of English learners at a wide range of proficiency levels, from those who just started learning to those who have a goal to acquire advanced proficiency.

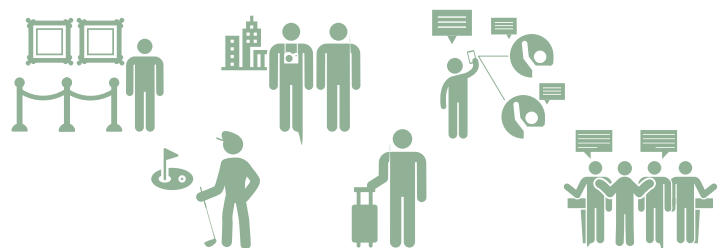
TOEIC Program: A family of assessments of English-communication skills in everyday life and the workplace

*English as
a global
lingua franca*

English has become the most widely used language for business and international communication around the world. It is the most commonly learned foreign language worldwide; it is the primary language of the Internet and the information age; and it is a global lingua franca for communication among speakers of many different first languages.

For those who are just beginning to learn English, developing their English skills can expand access to information and activities such as international travel. Even at lower levels of proficiency, English skills can be extremely useful for everyday life situations, including free-time activities (hobbies, sports), travel and tourism, entertainment (movies, music, museums) and communicating with people who do not speak one's native language.

Thus, while many English learners at lower proficiency levels may have a long-term goal of acquiring advanced proficiency, there are immediate, practical uses for English skills at beginner- to intermediate-levels in many everyday situations such as social conversations and activities related to personal hobbies, travel and tourism, and entertainment. Of course, there are also workplace situations where those who have English skills at beginner to intermediate levels can contribute, such as office meetings and text chats with colleagues.



At intermediate and advanced levels of proficiency, English language skills are useful across a range of everyday and workplace situations. English skills are often used in the workplace to read, listen to, and understand job-related information, as well as to collaborate with colleagues, communicate with clients and negotiate with partners around the world.

For some English learners, achieving intermediate proficiency provides access to basic information necessary for their daily work. For others, attaining more advanced English proficiency is their ultimate goal and related to their future career prospects in globally oriented businesses.

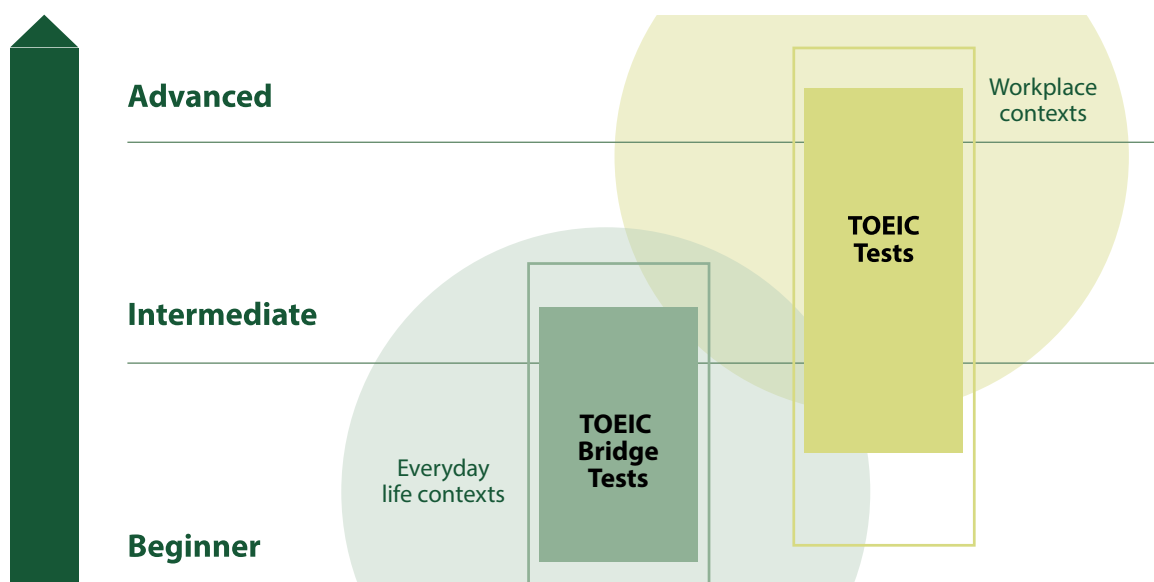
Employees and entrepreneurs may be learning English because they realize how critical it is for successful communication in the current era. In the international workplace, English skills may be particularly desirable in the areas of corporate development, finance, manufacturing, personnel and various technical jobs.



TOEIC Bridge tests and TOEIC tests as a “family of assessments”

As shown in the figure below, the TOEIC Program tests provide comprehensive evaluations of English skills with these proficiency levels (beginner to advanced) and these real-world communication contexts (everyday life and the workplace) in mind.

The TOEIC Program includes the TOEIC Bridge tests, which measure beginning to intermediate levels of English proficiency, and the TOEIC tests, which can evaluate beginning to advanced levels of English proficiency but provide best measurement at intermediate to advanced levels.



TOEIC Bridge Tests: measure beginning to intermediate levels of English proficiency

- TOEIC Bridge Listening and Reading Tests
- TOEIC Bridge Speaking and Writing Tests

TOEIC Tests: emphasize English proficiency at intermediate to advanced levels

- TOEIC Listening and Reading Tests
- TOEIC Speaking and Writing Tests

The TOEIC Bridge tests: Emphasizing English skills for everyday young adult and adult life

The TOEIC Bridge tests measure the foundational English language skills (listening, reading, speaking, writing) of beginning and intermediate learners and provide a reliable, valid and fair picture of learners' English communication abilities for everyday life (Schmidgall et al., 2019, 2021).

For listening, test tasks measure the ability to understand short spoken texts, such as conversations and talks.

For reading, test tasks measure the ability to understand short written English texts.

For speaking, test tasks measure the ability to communicate immediate needs (e.g., asking simple questions, making requests), provide basic information and interact on topics of personal interest with people who are speaking clearly.

For writing, test tasks measure the ability to write notes and messages relating to matters of immediate need. These abilities are assessed using test tasks that are appropriate and relevant for English learners at lower levels of proficiency.

Public settings may include travel and tourism, entertainment events or shopping. Only the most general workplace settings that require no specialized knowledge would be included, such as office meetings, small talk and written chats.

These types of settings and topics occur relatively frequently in everyday life, providing a realistic setting in which test takers at lower proficiency can demonstrate their listening, reading, speaking or writing skills.

The TOEIC Bridge and TOEIC tests are both designed to evaluate the four skills of English proficiency directly for their targeted learner populations. By measuring listening, reading, speaking and writing, the TOEIC Program tests offer a comprehensive approach that gives a more complete picture of an individual's overall English proficiency.

By emphasizing the real-world settings and tasks that are relevant to different levels of English proficiency, the TOEIC Program tests are also designed to produce evaluations that reflect what test takers are likely to be able to do in real life.

The TOEIC tests: Emphasizing English skills for the workplace

The TOEIC tests measure English skills in workplace contexts and everyday life. Focusing on listening, reading, speaking and writing skills that are essential in these contexts, the tests provide opportunities for test takers to demonstrate their proficiency in a variety of ways (ETS, 2022a, 2022b).

TOEIC Listening questions are based on statements, questions, conversations, and talks recorded in several varieties of English. For example, the tests feature the accents spoken in multiple geographical regions: the United States, Great Britain, Canada and Australia and New Zealand. The abilities measured by TOEIC Listening questions include test takers' ability to infer the "gist" and understand details in short and extended English speech, as well as the ability to understand a speaker's purpose or implied meaning in a phrase or sentence of speech.

TOEIC Reading questions require understanding of different kinds of written material. TOEIC Reading test questions are designed to measure test takers' ability to locate and understand specific information, connect information, and make inferences about information in texts, along with their understanding of vocabulary and grammar in context.

TOEIC Speaking test tasks allow test takers to demonstrate whether they can (a) produce language that is intelligible to proficient English speakers, (b) carry out routine social and occupational interactions, and (c) create connected, sustained discourse appropriate to the typical workplace.

TOEIC Writing test tasks enable test takers to show whether they can create well-formed sentences, produce texts of multiple sentences to convey information and produce texts of multiple paragraphs to express complex ideas. All such abilities measured by the TOEIC tests are needed to communicate effectively in the real world, especially in workplace settings.

Tests do not unfairly advantage employed individuals over students

Although TOEIC test tasks are set in the context of everyday and workplace communication, the focus is on general purposes rather than the knowledge and skills that characterize a specific type of business or workplace.

The TOEIC Listening and Reading test includes settings and situations related to everyday activities (such as travel, entertainment, health and dining out) and general workplace contexts (such as corporate development, finance, manufacturing, offices, personnel and purchasing).

The TOEIC Speaking and Writing tests include tasks that people are likely to perform in diverse work-related situations or in familiar daily activities that are common across cultures and contexts. The TOEIC tests do not evaluate or require industry-specific business knowledge, and test takers are not expected to know specialized business and technical vocabulary beyond what is used in everyday work activities.

It is important to highlight that all test items go through a multistep content and fairness review that is designed to minimize the possibility that items contain content that would unfairly advantage one group of test takers over another (e.g., employees vs. students, older vs. younger, males vs. females). In a recent study (Schmidgall et al., 2024), ETS researchers and psychometricians investigated whether the TOEIC Listening and Reading test has unfairly advantaged employed (vs. student) test takers. The researchers used a statistical methodology designed to identify the presence of “differential item functioning” (DIF) in any of the items.

DIF analyses are conducted to identify potential bias in test items and test scores. When an analysis shows that there is DIF associated with an item, this implies that the item may unfairly advantage one group of test takers over another (e.g., employees vs. students). Items flagged for DIF are then scrutinized by a panel of content experts to determine whether there is content that may unfairly favor one group over another.

In this study, the researchers analyzed nine forms of the TOEIC Listening and Reading test (1,800 items), conducting a DIF analysis that compared the performance of full-time students vs. full-time employed test takers.

Initially, only 18 of 1,800 items (1.0%) were flagged for potential DIF, meaning that a very small number of items may have unfairly advantaged employed test takers over students (or vice-versa). An expert panel then reviewed these items and ultimately concluded that none of the items could be clearly identified as biased in favor of employed (or student) test takers.

The extremely small percentage of items flagged for DIF by the statistical analysis from a large sample of TOEIC test items – and the conclusions of the expert panel that the items did not clearly exhibit bias toward student (or employed) test takers – should reassure test takers, teachers and score users that TOEIC test content is developed in a manner that does not unfairly advantage employed (vs. student) test takers.

The TOEIC Program tests — the TOEIC Bridge tests and TOEIC tests — cater to the needs of diverse English language learners of different backgrounds (such as students or employed individuals, among others) and with different levels of English proficiency.

The TOEIC Program recommends that test takers select and utilize appropriate tests according to their goals and purposes — what proficiency level they want to achieve and which contexts or situations they want to emphasize.

TOEIC Program learning journey

*A helpful
indicator for
the language
learning
journey*

The design of the TOEIC Bridge and TOEIC tests makes them useful for English learners, teachers and organizations who are interested in a reliable, valid and fair assessment of the English proficiency needed for everyday adult life and/or the workplace from beginning to advanced proficiency levels.

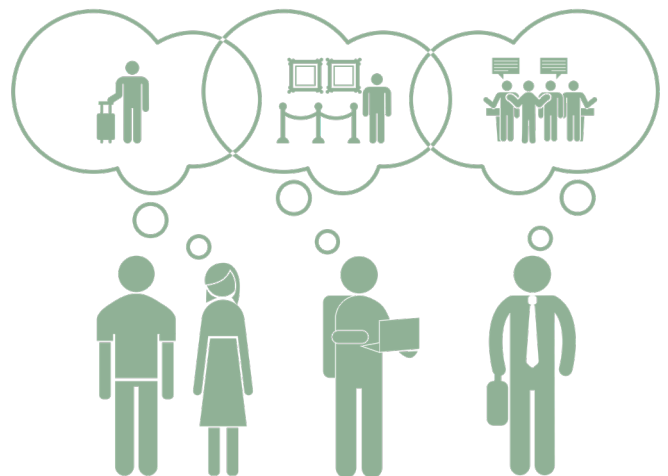
These tests can serve as useful indicators, as learners work to develop their English proficiency across the four skills, and they provide helpful benchmarks of how far learners have come in their learning journey.

TOEIC Bridge tests allow beginning to intermediate learners to better demonstrate what they can do

For secondary school students or adult learners who are at lower levels of English proficiency, the TOEIC Bridge tests provide a comprehensive and useful evaluation of their developing language knowledge and skills. TOEIC Bridge test tasks are somewhat easier than TOEIC test tasks, as they are carefully designed by experts to be appropriate for beginning- to intermediate-proficiency level learners.

For test takers at lower proficiency levels, the experience of taking the standard TOEIC test may be challenging due to its relative difficulty.

By contrast, TOEIC Bridge test tasks reflect the kinds of communicative tasks that English learners at this level should be able to perform in real-world settings, enabling test takers to better demonstrate their true knowledge and skills and show what they actually can do in English.



Intermediate and advanced learners can select which test to use based on their emphasis or needs

For learners at intermediate levels of proficiency, both the TOEIC Bridge tests and TOEIC tests are potentially relevant. One important consideration in identifying an appropriate assessment is the context in which language skills are evaluated.

Consequently, if there is a reason to evaluate English language proficiency with an emphasis on everyday language use (for example, personal and public settings), the TOEIC Bridge tests are potentially more relevant.

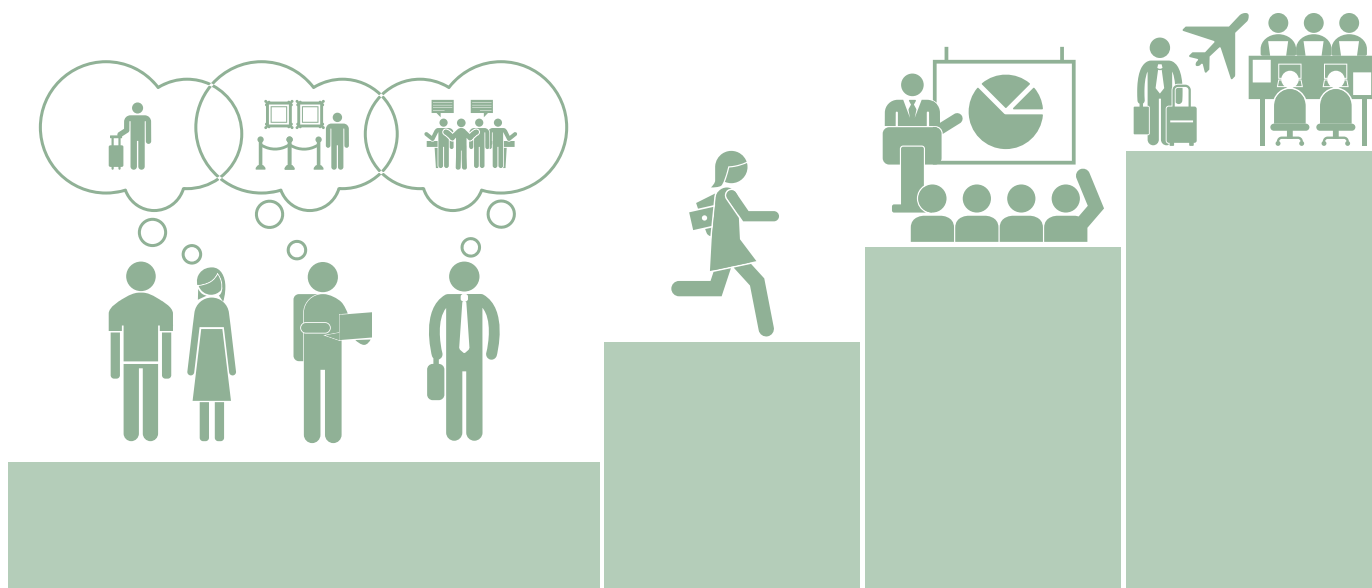
Emphasis on...

Everyday language use or **Workplace settings?**

In general, adult test takers at intermediate to advanced levels of proficiency, who aim to work effectively in international workplace settings, will find that the TOEIC tests are well-suited to their English learning trajectories and communication needs.

It is important to note here that, although the TOEIC tests are designed to provide information about a test taker's English proficiency in everyday life and workplace settings, the tests, as mentioned earlier, do not require any specialized business knowledge and do not advantage those with business experience. In general, TOEIC test tasks are more difficult and complex than TOEIC Bridge test tasks, but this is due to the nature of the communicative tasks themselves, as opposed to the workplace-oriented topics and settings.

Test scores on the TOEIC tests, reported across a broad range of proficiency levels for each of the four skills, offer precise indications of how well learners, whether students or employed individuals, can use English for a variety of common communication purposes, as well as how far they have come in achieving their English language goals.



So far, we have looked at the TOEIC Program from the viewpoint of a learner who wants to find an appropriate test that can support their learning path as they develop their English proficiency.

However, we would like to remind readers that the TOEIC tests can provide useful information for learners across the entire range of proficiency, including lower levels.

For example, a learner, who has just started learning English but wants to know the distance between their current level and ultimate goal of acquiring advanced-level proficiency, can utilize the TOEIC tests. Also, a student at a lower level of proficiency, who wants to experience communication tasks in real-life workplace settings to identify the aspects they need to improve, can utilize the TOEIC tests.

Furthermore, from the viewpoint of score users in organizations (for example, a language learning program), the TOEIC tests offer an effective and efficient solution for placing all levels of their students (from beginners to advanced level students) in appropriate classes/courses.

Another example is when a corporate user may need to use the TOEIC tests for all of its employees who vary in English proficiency levels (including beginner level) in order to assign appropriate posts to each individual.

English learners and their teachers will find that scores on the TOEIC Bridge and TOEIC tests can be used to chart learners' progress and provide feedback on their developing language skills using trustworthy, relevant and carefully designed assessments.

Employers and organizations should also find the scores on TOEIC Program tests useful for selecting or identifying individuals who have the English language skills desirable for a particular program or position.

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Appendix

Examples of the contexts (settings and situations) in which the TOEIC and TOEIC Bridge tests questions are set:

Context	TOEIC tests	TOEIC Bridge tests
Corporate development	research, product development	—
Dining	business and informal lunches, banquets, receptions, restaurant reservations	lunches and dinners, restaurants, reservations, picnics
Entertainment	cinema, theater, music, art, exhibitions, museums, media	cinema, theater, music, art, museums
Finance and budgeting	banking, investments, taxes, accounting, billing	—
General business	contracts, negotiations, mergers, marketing, sales, warranties, business planning, conferences, labor relations	banks, libraries, post offices, appointments, advertisements
Health	medical insurance, visiting doctors, dentists, clinics, hospitals	general health and healthcare
Housing/Corporate property	construction, specifications, buying and renting, electric and gas services	(Housing) apartments, houses, buying and renting, repairs
Manufacturing	assembly lines, plant management, quality control	—
Offices	board meetings, committees, letters, memoranda, telephone, fax and e-mail messages, office equipment and furniture, office procedures	letters, telephone, email and text messages, office equipment and furniture, office small talk
Personnel	recruiting, hiring, retiring, salaries, promotions, job applications, job advertisements, pensions, awards	—
Purchasing/Shopping	(Purchasing) shopping, ordering supplies, shipping, invoices	(Shopping) groceries, clothes, online purchases
Technical	electronics, technology, computers, laboratories and related equipment, technical specifications	Computers, technology
Travel and others	trains, airplanes, taxis, buses, ships, ferries, tickets, schedules, station and airport announcements, car rentals, hotels, reservations, delays, cancellations	directions, trains, airplanes, taxis, buses, ships, ferries, tickets, schedules, station and airport announcements, car rentals, hotels, reservations (Others) hobbies, sports, daily routines, free-time activities, weather forecasts, news programs, newspapers